



TESTIMONY
April 9, 2019

House Committee on Energy & Environment
Chair Ken Helm

RE: Testimony in Opposition to HB 2619 -- *Prohibiting sale, purchase or use of neonicotinoid pesticides*

Submitted by Katie Fast, Oregonians for Food & Shelter
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Oregonians for Food & Shelter (OFS), Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) and Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) oppose House Bill 2619, which would prohibit a person from selling, offering for sale, purchasing or using specific neonicotinoid insecticides or others as determined by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

Neonicotinoids are an entire class of insecticides, including seven different active ingredients and over 625 products registered in Oregon. Farmers, professional applicators *and* homeowners use neonicotinoids to safely protect a wide variety of crops, crop seed prior to planting, ornamental flowers, trees and shrubs, pets and homes.

“Neonic” products have replaced older, more toxic insecticides because of their effectiveness, and they are less toxic to birds and mammals. Neonicotinoid products are classified as ‘general use’ by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and have been registered under EPA’s Conventional Reduced Risk Program due to their favorable mammalian safety and environmental profile.

Banning neonicotinoid pesticides in Oregon will remove these tools from homeowners and growers without scientific justification. There has been much discussion over the last few years around neonicotinoids and pollinators. It must be highlighted that the concerns around pesticide use and potential effects on bees are very important, but especially important to those involved in agriculture. Oregon farmers depend on bees to pollinate many of their crops, but also depend on pesticide tools to control destructive pests. Similarly, commercial beekeepers rely on healthy crops to optimize their pollination services. This means that Oregon growers and beekeepers have a lot at stake in this conversation and each share a vested interest in ensuring that protecting bee health, and the use of pesticides, are not mutually exclusive. Bee health is important to all of us and nobody wants to see adverse incidents that add to bee population declines. It is important to let science be our guide in determining the use and distribution of pesticides in Oregon.

The science-based labels on pesticide products are the law, and we regularly remind our members of the importance of reading and following the pesticide label. Incidents of illegal applications should be addressed on a case-by-case basis but should not be used as a reason to add more restrictions on legal uses.

Any person who currently uses a pesticide (homeowner, landscaper, grower, forester, etc.) is required by state and federal law to explicitly follow label directions. Additionally, many applicators must be certified (by taking and passing one or more pesticide examinations) and then licensed by the ODA as a pesticide applicator. Licensed applicators must also take continuing education credits to keep their applicator license.

Eliminating specific neonicotinoids would be detrimental and ineffective. Besides being extremely costly and confusing, it would create immediate violations as distribution of these are available in many pet stores, garden centers, big box stores, local farm stores and agricultural pesticide dealers. The inability for pet owners to purchase and use flea control products, farmers to plant seeds coated with neonicotinoid products, ranchers to use cattle ear tags impregnated with neonicotinoids or government programs to safely control invasive insects, will have no short or long-term impact on bee health.

While we understand the concerns of beekeepers, and the public at large, the issue of declining bee populations unfortunately has no simple answer. In fact, research on Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) has highlighted a complex interaction of numerous factors that play a role in bee health and found no singular cause of the problem. While pesticides are often noted as one factor, they are not considered the primary one.

Current research has not shown neonicotinoids as a primary factor in bee health decline. And unfortunately, banning neonics ignores the important role these products play in managing pests that can have devastating effects. Neonicotinoids provide unique environmental, economic and public health benefits, such as:

- Effective protection against invasive species which can harm important urban landscapes. (i.e. control of the Emerald Ash Borer which can devastate urban forests).
- Systemic insect control not provided by other chemical classes.
- Lower impact on many non-target organisms than the older products they replaced, protecting natural enemies which allows for greater use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies.
- Effective control of disease carrying vectors.
- Neonics are some of the most effective tools for the control of bedbugs.
- Extended control which limits the number of applications needed, and therefore limits applicator risk of exposure.
- Control of pests which are resistant to other chemical classes.

We believe that a thorough review of the data shows that neonicotinoids are a safe, effective tool for protecting human health, property, and animal health from unwanted pests. Banning these important products in Oregon will result in less options to contain destructive pests and provide little, if any, benefit to bee populations. ***Recognizing the current science and collaborative efforts to protect pollinators, we ask you to vote NO on HB 2619.***

Thank you for your consideration, and please contact us if you have any questions.